

Harvard Allston Task Force
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 28, 2006
Honan-Allston Library
6:30 p.m.

I. Attendance:

Harvard Allston Task Force

Paul Berkeley
John Cusack
Rita DiGesse
Brian Gibbons
Michael Hanlon
Millie Hollum McLaughlin
Bruce Houghton
Ray Mellone
Tim Norton

Boston Redevelopment Authority

Gerald Autler
Linda Kowalcky

Harvard University

Will Donham
Kevin McCluskey
Dave Moffatt
Andy O'Brien
Alison Reinhardt
Maile Takahashi

State of Massachusetts

State Senator Jarrett Barrios
Michael Bloom, Director of Administration, Office of State Senator Jarrett Barrios

The meeting began at 6:30 p.m. Gerald Autler provided information on Boston's six economic development initiatives:

1. Back Streets: The goal is to retain and grow industrial and commercial businesses and their job base. Focuses on small and medium-sized companies. www.bostonbackstreets.org
2. LifeTech Boston: Fosters growth of Boston's life sciences sector. Strategic approach designed to attract, retain, support life sciences companies. www.lifetechboston.com
3. Onein3 Boston: Focuses on attracting, retaining and engaging Bostonians between the ages of 20 and 34. www.onein3boston.org
4. Create Boston: Focuses on the creative economy. Sector includes filmmaking, design, performing arts, crafts and music.
5. Artist Space Initiative: Offers space for rent/purchase at a variety of prices. Permanently dedicated to artists through deed restrictions or similar legal mechanisms.
<http://www.ci.boston.ma.us/bra/econdev/EconDev.asp#13>
6. Boston Retail Market: Focuses on maintaining and enhancing retail activity.
www.bostonretailmarket.com

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Audience member: Can you clarify how the city “helps” residents through these economic initiatives?

Gerald Autler: The websites of each of the initiatives have more specific information. As an example, the Artist Space initiative helps match property seekers with property owners who have space that could be used for studios.

Bruce Houghton: The Back Streets initiative has helped him as a business owner understand what a city is and what a city does and is a good interface to find out more about city services. It has also helped to match him with city leaders.

Audience member: Does the BRA run an industrial park or incubator space? Does the Harvard Business School have incubator space?

Gerald: The City of Boston owns the Marine Industrial Park that serves as an incubator industrial park.

Kathy Spiegelman: At one time, the Harvard Business School considered creating incubator space on their campus for their students to use but as of today it is not operational.

Audience member: Does the city have a specific goal for the economic initiatives in Allston? If not, will this evolve during the scoping process?

Gerald Autler: At this point the city’s goals are in very general terms but will evolve during the scoping process. Workforce development will be a key initiative for the city along with initiatives that focus on creating more jobs. The city doesn’t define a specific threshold for what should be achieved. The Department of Neighborhood Development would have a better idea of the appropriate mixes and uses for the main streets.

Bruce Houghton: There aren’t any specific community benefits outlined in the BRA’s scoping determination. Is this something the city is asking the Task Force to come up with?

Gerald Autler: Yes, that is one of the things the Task Force is being asked to do. The Task Force is an advisory body that was formed to help guide the city on Harvard’s planning and development process. Task Force members should think about how these economic initiatives can be advanced in Allston and to what extent Harvard could participate.

Millie Hollum McLaughlin: At many community meetings requests or “wish lists” have been made for different community benefits that community members want Harvard to provide. Can we get a generated list of all the things that have come up at past community meetings?

Ray Mellone: A generated list hasn’t been produced because up until now the focus has been on developing a community master plan. Now the Task Force is at a point where it is time to discuss specific tangible benefits.

Gerald presented the Task Force and audience members with background data and information on Allston/Brighton which included the Allston-Brighton Neighborhood Profile produced by the BRA in 1997. Gerald said that although the information was outdated, he wanted to share it with the Task Force to help trigger ideas for what kind of information they want from the BRA, what kind of maps and data would be useful, and what data is a priority.

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Audience member: Provide data detailing the amount of taxes that are paid by homeowners in Allston, the percentage of total taxes to the city, the amount Harvard pays in taxes in Allston on its residential and commercial properties.

Ray Mellone: It would be helpful to have recent census figures.

Gerald Autler: The Census 2000 Data publications are located on the BRA's website.
<http://www.ci.boston.ma.us/bra>

Mike Hanlon: Can we have data that relates to just North Allston?

Gerald Autler: Most of the city's data is tied to specific parameters so extracting data for just North Allston will make it harder to compare the information across different data sets. For some types of data it will be relatively easy to separate the figures pertaining to North Allston but for other data sets it will be like comparing apples to oranges.

Ray Mellone: Data could be separated out by parcel number.

Senator Barrios: Using the census data by track level can be helpful to provide very specific data.

Gerald said that at the last meeting an audience member had asked about how many jobs had been lost in Allston and referred audience members to the information he brought on Allston Businesses and Employment Data and Allston Employers by Size of Establishment. Gerald pointed out that the data reflected an increase in the number of small firms and a decrease in the number of larger firms. Gerald suggested that economic strategies can be derived from looking at the data. For example, the Allston community may be seeing a shift towards smaller businesses and as a result might want to implement economic strategies that foster and encourage the growth of small businesses.

Bruce Houghton: The summary reflected in the Allston Business and Employment data is a dismal outlook for the neighborhood because the industries that are growing, such as retail trade and accommodation and food services, don't provide substantive, high quality jobs for the neighborhood residents.

Kathy Spiegelman: The data indicates that Allston is in the midst of a transformation which doesn't necessarily indicate a dismal future.

Gerald Autler: The neighborhood will have to adjust to the negative changes and seize the positive changes.

Ray Mellone: The data should indicate whether the change was a result of the economy or whether the change was a result of Harvard's expansion. The data presented doesn't help the Task Force to understand what will happen in the future and does not provide a full picture. It should be qualified to reflect how and why things changed and what happened afterwards.

John Cusack: Looking at the raw numbers is a good start.

Mike Hanlon: Can Harvard look at these numbers and project how they will be different five years from now?

Kathy Spiegelman: Harvard will have to project employment numbers for its expansion in response to the BRA's scoping determination. As of right now, Harvard projects that within the next five years, an additional 1,500 jobs will be brought into the area as a direct result of Harvard's expansion. Most likely

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1,000 jobs will be related to the science complex project and 500 will be related to the arts and cultural projects.

Ray Mellone: The construction jobs related to Harvard's expansion should be given to Allston residents. Often this does not happen.

John Cusack: The City of Boston has a residency program that aims to have 50% of the construction workers for a particular job, reside in the area the construction is taking place. This varies from job to job but by the time the project is finished millions of dollars in income have been paid to the construction workers.

Senator Jarrett Barrios: The two main concerns people tend to have when he is asked about Harvard's expansion plans are what the implications will be for the value of residents' homes and property taxes and how crime and public safety will be impacted. The BRA should look at recent examples of other universities in Boston and universities in other cities to see how those institutions' expansions affected the neighborhoods they reside in. Statistics from those examples should be given to the Task Force and community members to help inform residents of patterns, expectations and provide comparative experiences.

Audience member: The BRA needs to provide clarification in regards to its scoping determination for Harvard that was released on Thursday, June 15th. The statement in question is in section 12. Other under Public Safety that states, "In light of anticipated undergraduate housing to be included in the Phase 1 IMP, the Amendment or other documents should also address issues related to student behavior and models for working with the Boston Police and other city departments to address such problems." This is of concern because undergraduate housing is not mentioned as one of the three projects in Harvard's Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (IMP NF).

Gerald Autler: There are only three projects in Harvard's IMP NF: the science complex, an interim facility for the Harvard University Art Museum, and an interim arts and culture building. As a result the majority of the scoping determination is in relation to those three projects. The reference to undergraduate housing is not a prominent part of the scope because it is not immediately relevant to the IMP NF. Harvard has indicated that undergraduate housing will be a part of its new Master Plan so the BRA thought it would be appropriate to make reference to it in the scoping determination.

Kathy Spiegelman: In a letter to the community in 2003, President Summers indicated Harvard's desire to create undergraduate housing in Allston. Since then undergraduate housing has always been a part of Harvard's proposed development plans. However, Harvard has always stated that undergraduate housing will be located at the edge of the Charles River and as close to Cambridge as possible.

Please see the Allston Initiative website or speak with Kathy with questions or for clarification.

Audience member: John Holmes submitted his public comments to the BRA on May 26, 2006 and never received any confirmation back from the BRA that they were received. His comments also were not included in the scoping determination appendix.

Gerald stated that Mr. Holmes's comments are included in the appendix of the scoping determination. The scoping determination will be put on the BRA's web site.

At the July 10th Task Force meeting Stefan Behnisch, the architect for Harvard's first science building, will present preliminary design schemes and design guidelines. Gerald Autler asked the Task Force members to review the proposed schedule of Harvard Allston Task Force meeting topics. Ray proposed that Stefan

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Behnisch's presentation be limited to a half-hour and asked what other topics Task Force members might want to address.

Bruce Houghton: A half-hour to discuss the proposed meeting schedule further.

Paul Berkeley: Adam Schulman from the Boston Transportation Department should be on the agenda for one of the meetings because he told the Task Force that the BTD would have more information for them regarding street parking, traffic patterns, etc.

Millie Holum McLaughlin: Before the October 23rd meeting on Community Benefits we should have a wish list compiled of all the ideas that have been brought up in the past. We should also have a process in place of how to gather ideas for community benefits.

Bruce Houghton: Each meeting discusses a different subject area that will have an impact on the community. The last half hour of each meeting should be reserved for discussion on community benefits that relate to the subject area that was discussed throughout the meeting.

Gerald Autler: A lot of the neighborhood's vision for the different subject areas is already in the North Allston Neighborhood Strategic Plan (NANSP). Prior to each meeting, Task Force members should refer back to the sections in the NANSP that discuss the topic areas for the upcoming meeting.

Ray Mellone: The Task Force needs to have some time together to have a working meeting. After Stefan Behnisch presents at the July 10th meeting, the Task Force should hold an executive session.

Mike Hanlon: The framework for existing and future utility infrastructure should be a meeting topic.

Gerald Autler: Utility infrastructure will be discussed at the meeting on sustainability. Harvard will be required to look at the infrastructure systems that will be required beyond the three projects proposed in the IMPNF.

Audience member: Harvard should provide updates on its Master Planning work and the work that Cooper, Robertson and Partners is doing.

Audience member: At the July 26th meeting when university-community partnerships are discussed, Harvard's relationships with other communities such as Cambridge should be discussed. Examples of positive relationships and negative relationships should be discussed so that the positives can be emulated and the negatives can be avoided.

Ray Mellone: Doesn't think that would be very productive. The Task Force should be looking forward not backward.

Audience member: At the sustainability meeting, examples of sustainability initiatives already being implemented though out the neighborhood should be discussed. Harvard should also summarize what was discussed at the sustainability conference that it held in April.

Ray Mellone: The meeting minutes for the June 12th meeting are incomplete.

The 4th page of the meeting minutes was accidentally left out. The complete minutes will be brought to the next Task Force meeting for approval at that time.

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Paul Berkeley: What is the construction going on in the athletic fields? It looks like it is more than what was discussed for the renovations of the stadium.

Kevin McCluskey is to find out the specific details and report back to the Task Force.

An audience member referred to a Boston Globe article printed on June 6th that quoted Chuck Sullivan, Director of athletic communications at Harvard, saying that putting turf and a bubble on Harvard stadium would allow for more than 5 football games a year. The audience member also reference the June 12th Harvard Allston Task Force meeting minutes when Kevin McCluskey said that the renovations to the stadium was an internal reconstruction project on a historic building so Harvard only had to get approval from the Historical Landmark commission.

Audience member: Does the city of Boston require a permit or community review process in order for Harvard to change the usage of Harvard stadium? Residents already have a hard enough time dealing with the traffic on Harvard football game days as it is. If Harvard is going to increase the usage of the stadium the community should know about it and Harvard should be required to have a plan for how they will deal with the increase in traffic.

Ray Mellone: In terms of zoning, increasing the usage of the stadium is not a change of use so zoning permits would not be affected.

Bruce Houghton: As Part of Harvard's community benefits package Harvard should provide adequate parking and shuttle services for events.

The meeting closed at 8:40 p.m.